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SERBIA AND HUMAN FREEDOM

An address delivered at the Palace Hotel, June 28,

By SIDNEY CORYN

"If Serbia is dominated, Germany has won the war."



Why are these three attacking Serbia?

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*Study this map and understand the plot for
world conquest.*



*Read the following text and assist public opinion
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KOSSOVO, 1389 AND THE WORLD WAR

By SIDNEY CORYN

IT is not a little significant of the changing relationships of the world that such a meeting of representative American citizens should be held in San Francisco in order to celebrate the anniversary of the Battle of Kossovo. But I think that we are celebrating something more than the anniversary of a battle. We are celebrating also the beginning of an era of Serbian history that we believe to be now approaching a triumphant end. We are reminding ourselves of a struggle for human freedom that is probably without its like in the history of the race. And we are looking forward to the end of that struggle with the confident belief that it will bring with it the emancipation of the Southern European Slavs as well as the emancipation of civilization itself from the threat of a most cruel and remorseless tyranny.

Surely it is now time that the world should recognize its debt to the Serbian people. For we are not here to offer to them the gifts of our benevolence. It is not only our charity that we would tender to them, grievously though they need it. Our debt is one of gratitude, and if we have for long been unaware of our obligation it should now be discharged with an added emphasis. It is a debt due from a young western nation founded on the ideals of human liberty to an eastern people already old in suffering and in martyrdom for those same ideals. For before this nation was born, the soil of Serbia, every inch of it, had been reddened again and again with the blood of her patriots who died for human freedom.

It was Serbia who offered herself as a shield of flame and steel between Europe and the Asiatic invader. It was Serbia who made possible the evolution of European civilization with its promise for the western world. It was Serbia who turned back the tide of Mohammedan empire and saved humanity from the paralysis that threatened it.

The imagination can hardly conceive of a world in which the battle of Kossovo had not been fought, in which Serbia had not resisted the Moslem flood, and so given to Europe the necessary time in which to save herself. Europe was almost too late, even then. The Turks had taken Buda Pesth after the Battle of Kossovo. A little later and they were under the walls of Vienna. It was one of those crises in which humanity holds its breath, one of those tremendous epochs when the world seems to shiver upon the edge of irretrievable cataclysm. But for the valor of Serbia there would today be a Mohammedan empire from the Bosphorus to the Atlantic. The civilization of the human race would have been arrested, paralyzed, ossified.

All this would be a matter only for the curious student of history but for the fact that we have now witnessed a repetition of the role played so magnificently by Serbia five hundred years ago. Just as she interposed herself between Europe and the Turk, so she has now interposed herself between the world and Teutonic domination. She was shattered by the Turk in 1839. She has been shattered by Austria and Germany in the war that is now being waged. It is the same role but upon a different stage. These are among the facts that we ought to know, as we ought to know the reasons underlying them. We ought to know why Serbia has been the focus for the persistent hates of tyrants, why she has now been singled out for destruction, and as a prelude to the destruction of human freedom, why her soil was

the first to be ravaged, and her people the first to be so tortured and enslaved. Serbia is now the ally of America in the greatest war that has ever been waged, and an ally of which America needs not to be ashamed. For Serbia is old and worn in the struggle for human liberty. For one thousand years she has known nothing else. It is her habit to fight for freedom. Her history is one long story of resistance to tyranny, and of the vengeance that tyranny has wreaked upon her.

To understand why Serbia was placed in the forefront of the present struggle it is necessary to glance at the two lines of national policy, the Austrian and the German, that converged upon this one little Balkan state. Those two lines of policy originated in the definite and distinctive greeds, ambitions and fears of the Teutonic Empires, but they approach each other and gradually become entwined in the events of the fateful years preceding the war. It is to them, and to them alone, that we must look for an explanation of the war, which thus loses the quality of the unforeseen and the unpremeditated ascribed to it in the popular mind. In that light it becomes the intended and the calculated culmination of forty years of sinister diplomacy and intrigue.

Let us look first at the share of Austria in the production of this world calamity that has now engulfed America. Unfortunately it is a share of which we here in America have only the vaguest conception. To us Serbia is no more than a Balkan state of insignificant geographical dimensions, the scene of constant turmoil, and associated with national feuds with which we have not even cared to acquaint ourselves. But Serbia from the point of view of the Hapsburg monarchy is something far more than this. Serbia is the leader of the great Slav movement of Southern Europe. To the 28,000,000 Slavs of the Austrian Empire she appeals

as the representative of their nationality, and as the hope of their coming enfranchisement and independence.

The Austrian Empire consists of four races. The Germanic people in Austria number 12,000,000. The Latin races, comprising Italians and Roumanians, are represented by 4,000,000 people. There are 10,000,000 Magyars, originally of Asiatic origin, and there are 28,000,000 Slavs, sometimes known as Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Ruthenes, Slovenes and Serbo-Croats. All of these peoples, by whatever other names they may be known, are actually and practically identical, however much it may suit the policy of Austria to represent them as separate and distinct nationalities. They are substantially the same in language, tradition, sympathy and aspiration. They are not acquiescent parts of the Austrian Empire. On the contrary they are enemies of the Austrian Empire and its victims, hating the yoke that binds them to that Empire, despising the Germans and the Magyars to whom they are immeasurably superior in virtue and intelligence, and looking forward with unquenchable hope to their ultimate assimilation by Serbia into one unified Southern Slav State. The German and Magyar elements, on their part, have returned the hate with interest, and have tried to ward off the danger of disintegration by persistent repressive measures that have never been surpassed in their brutal ferocity. There is no more shameful page in human history than this, nor one more full of a concentrated and sustained cruelty. The Germans and the Magyars of the Austrian Empire represent a feudal aristocracy that has all the worst attributes of Prussianism. The Slavs of the Austrian Empire represent a conquered but still dangerous people, dangerous by their numbers, and by the steady perseverance of their hopes of liberation, and of an independent union with Serbia.

Small wonder, then, that Serbia should be an object of dread and suspicion to the dominant Teutonic and Magyar elements of the Austrian Empire. The continuing sovereignty of Serbia meant the perpetual proclamation of free ideals, the perpetual contagion of democratic institutions. The Slavs of Austria could never become abject or acquiescent to tyranny so long as Serbia held aloft the banner of national life as a summons and an inspiration to her brethren under the Austrian scourge.

The obliteration of Serbia as a sovereign state thus became the cardinal principle of Austrian policies. At once we begin to understand the events that followed the assassination of the Archduke, and which we are now disposed to regard as a pretext rather than as a cause. Apply this cardinal principle, the extinction and destruction of Serbia, to all the obscure problems of Austrian policies for forty years, and it will solve them all. Never did Rome look forward to the ruin of Carthage with half the concentrated and sustained malice that Austria directed toward Serbia.

Again and again we find the expression of that destructive and malignant hate. We find Austria intervening at the end of the first Balkan war in order to deprive Serbia of her legitimate gains, and in order to rehabilitate the Turk. Here Austria had no lawful self-interest to serve, no honest policy to further. But Serbia at all costs must be thwarted, abashed and terrorized. The direct and intended result of Austria's action was to alienate Serbia and Bulgaria, to deprive Serbia of the advantages of her victory over the Turks, to break up the hegemony of the Balkan States, and to isolate Serbia within a circle of enemies. It was Austria, and Austria alone, that produced the second Balkan war, with its revival of Turkish misrule in Europe, and the resulting conflagration of rival passions in the Balkans. It was

a step in the undeviating policy that has been outlined, an integral part of the plan by which Austria intended to relieve herself from the menace and the contagion of Serbian liberty and of the Slav ideal. It was a link in the chain that led inevitably to the war—that was intended to lead to the war.

To indicate all the links in that fatal chain would be to write the history of Eastern Europe for forty years. It must suffice to point out some few of the more important. It was this same policy that led Austria to violate the Triple Alliance on the occasion of the war between Italy and Turkey, and to throw the whole of her passive weight into the scales against her ally, Italy, and on the side of Turkey, the age-long enemy of Serbia. No treaty could be allowed to interfere with that policy. No consideration of right and wrong could ever be permitted to stand between Austria and her prey. The destruction of Serbia had become a sort of monomania.

We now come to a point immediately preceding the outbreak of the war, and to a secret page of history, that, but for the war, might never have been divulged. It is sufficiently outlined by the speech made by the Italian premier before the Italian Parliament. Austria, he said in effect, had pleaded the assassination of the Archduke as the reason for her ultimatum to Serbia, and for her hostile acts against Serbia. But, as a matter of fact, Austria had proposed a war against Serbia a year before that assassination had occurred, and Italy, as a member of the Triple Alliance, had refused to sanction it. Austria had advanced no valid reason for such an act of aggression against Serbia, who was wholly innocent of any provocation or offense. The veto of Italy withheld Austria from the accomplishment of her designs at that time, and she was compelled to await a new opportunity.

The new opportunity was not for long delayed. It was furnished by the assassination of the Archduke, a crime of which Serbia was as completely innocent as California. It was committed by Austrian subjects, and upon Austrian soil. The criminals had been in Serbia shortly before the tragedy was enacted, and the Serbian authorities, suspecting the nature of their intentions, had ordered their expulsion, but the order was not carried into effect owing to the protest of the Austrian embassy, which took these suspected persons under its protection. Serbia disavowed all complicity in the crime, and Austria was unable to advance any valid evidence of her responsibility or connivance. But innocence was of no avail against such accusers as these. It was the old story of the wolf and the lamb. Serbia had already lain under sentence of death for forty years, and now at last had come the pretext for its execution. If that pretext had failed, some other would have been found. Austria would wait no longer. Moreover Germany was now hailing the dawn of *Der Tag*. She, too, was ready for the assault upon Serbia in pursuance of her own distinctive policy that was now inextricably blended with that of the sister Teutonic Empire. No wonder Karl Liebknecht should say in the German Reichstag that the assassination of the Archduke was hailed in high German circles as a providential act. No wonder that there should be something more than a suspicion that Austria not only intended the crime, but that she initiated the means of its accomplishment. For the profit of that crime was hers. It gave her the opportunity and the pretext to crush Serbia, and so to invoke success upon the policy that she had pursued undeviatingly for forty years.

Let us glance now for a moment at the policy of Germany which thus found itself in full accord with that of Austria. If Serbia was a threat to Austrian domination of

the Slav peoples at home and abroad she was no less a threat to the German hope of an Asiatic Empire and of world power. The German Emperor soon after his accession to the throne had effected an alliance with the Sultan of Turkey, and had declared himself the protector and the friend of all Mohammedan peoples throughout the world. He had obtained from the Sultan a concession for a railroad that was to run from Constantinople through Asia Minor and Mesopotamia to Bagdad, to the frontiers of Egypt, and to the shores of the Persian Gulf. It was to be a military railroad. There was no concealment about that, no attempt to hide the purpose to which it was to be put. Connecting at Constantinople with the great International Railroad through Europe it was to enable Germany to send her armed legions, almost without change of train, from Hamburg to Egypt and India. That a war for the conquest of Asia meant also a war for the conquest of Europe was fully recognized in the German scheme. France and Italy with their Mohammedan territories, Great Britain with India, Russia with her Persian interests, could never permit so tremendous an incitement to the fierce and fanatical Moslem world. They could not remain indifferent to so vast a threat to the stability of civilization. Even China would be affected, nor need we forget that America herself has Mohammedans under her flag. But Germany intended to fight the world. Hers was no leap in the dark. Bernhardt had supplied the watchword of *Weltmacht oder Niedergang*, thus following his master Treitschke. It had become the watchword of the German people; and Europe and America were asleep and refused to wake.

Trace the map of that railroad for yourselves. Leaving Germany it passes through Vienna and Buda Pesth, and thus becomes a knot in the Pan-German union between

Germany and Austria. And then it traverses Northern Serbia, and through the Serbian city of Nish. Thence it passes through Bulgaria, and through Turkey to Adrianople and Constantinople, and so into Asia Minor. It was to be the broad military highroad over which the Teuton armies were to march to world dominion. That the Bagdad railroad was actually intended for such a purpose is not a matter of speculation. The intention was trumpeted forth to the world. Germany in this respect had at least the merit of a certain tremendous frankness. Certain of her strength she made no effort to hide the uses to which it was to be put.

But there was a weak link in that railroad chain, and that weak link was Serbia. Turkey was already an ally of Germany and could be trusted. Bulgaria, too, was an ally, or could easily be made one by bribes or threats. Moreover, Bulgaria was now a deadly enemy of Serbia through Austrian intrigues, and would naturally gravitate toward any camp that was hostile to Serbia.

Serbia, then, was the weak link; and in such a railroad chain as that, and one dedicated to such ends, there must be no weak link. A hostile Serbia might mean the cutting of that chain at the moment of its greatest tension. And Serbia was certain to be hostile to any Teutonic scheme which involved the further extension of Austrian power over the Slav peoples. Austria had already seized Bosnia and Herzegovina with their Serbian populations. Her designs against Serbia herself were hardly matters of doubt. Serbia would never tolerate the passage through her territories, through her city of Nish, of Teuton armies bound on a mission of Asiatic, and then of world, domination. Her reputation as the champion of freedom and of national independence was to be fatal to her. Germany knew well that the Bagdad railroad would be no more than a rope

of sand in her grasp so long as any portion of that railroad was in Serbian hands. And so Germany had decreed the extinction of Serbia, and she found a ready accomplice in Austria, whose schemes thus ran parallel with her own.

Such, in brief outline, was the position occupied by Serbia in the broad stream of Teutonic policies that ran straight on to the precipice of war. On the one hand we have the Teutonic intention to dominate the world. On the other hand we have the tiny kingdom of Serbia blocking the Teutonic path to Asia, a perpetual menace to tyranny, and with the record of five hundred years to sustain that menace. It was a picture as dramatic as any picture that the world has ever seen, and the world is now paying in blood and anguish for its blindness to a drama that was ostentatiously unfolded before her eyes for forty years.

Serbia is a long way off, and to many Americans she has been little more than a name. None the less she is the center of the world war. Every gun fired in that war, whether it be on the Atlantic, at Verdun, or on Russia's northernmost battle line, is a gun fired either in defense of Serbia or in attack upon her. If the Central Powers should emerge from the war with the secured domination of Serbia, then the Central Powers will have won the war, and the road to world domination will be open to them. No matter what evacuations there may be elsewhere, no matter what indemnities they may pay, no matter how far they consent to the ratification of other frontiers, they will still have won the war if they are allowed directly or indirectly to tamper with the sovereignty of Serbia.

Therefore it may be said once more that it is not charity that we owe to Serbia, but gratitude. In very truth she stood, and still stands, between America and that vast Teutonic power that has included America in its scheme of

world domination. If that power should succeed in the subjugation of Serbia, it will have taken its first triumphant step along that path which must ultimately and even speedily be barred by America alone, and in defense of her liberties, and even of her right to exist as a nation. There is no room in the world for Americanism and for Prussianism. The waters of the Atlantic are not deep enough to extinguish their hostilities, nor wide enough to separate their rivalries. If they should ever find themselves alone in the amphitheatre of war, no man in America will be exempted either by youth or by age or by physical infirmities from bearing his part in such a struggle for national survival.

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